

REMARKS

This amendment is offered in response to the Office Action of April 18, 2001.

The Office Action has rejected Claims 1-8 as anticipated under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) by the Takehara reference (U.S. Patent No. 5,384,634).

The Office Action states that the Takehara reference discloses "several embodiments" which anticipate Claim 1. The Takehara reference discloses that the sheet bunch is matched, transferred a distance in one direction, and subsequently transferred in the opposite direction (see col. 7, line 55 through col. 8, line 20 with respect to Figure 7, and col. 12, lines 20-34 with respect to Figure 15).

However, col. 7, line 55 through col. 8, line 20 of the Takehara reference discloses that the second aligning member 155 is moved from the retracted position 155b to the reference position 155a which functions as the sheet end position. The aligning rod 36 of the first aligning member 38 is moved a predetermined amount in the direction E from the retracted position 38a by a pulse motor 32 operating in accordance with the pulse signals corresponding to the sheet size. The edge of the sheet S is abutted to the aligning rod 150 of the second

aligning rod 155. After the first aligning member 38 moves through a predetermined distance, it returns to the retracted position preparing for the next sheet discharge. At this time, the sheet S is discharged into the bin B of the sorter 1 from the main assembly of the copying machine 102. The next discharged sheet is shifted by a distance 331 by the first aligning member 38, so that it is aligned with the other sheets in the bin.

With respect to col. 12, lines 20-34, when the aligning operation is completed (as described above) by first and second aligning members 38', 115', stapler 200a staples S at a distance 0 from the first end with staple 212. Thereafter, the second aligning member moves to the retracted position. Then, the pushing member 300' is moved to position i and the sheets S are fed to a position such that the staple 212 from stapler 200a is at position 0 from the rear edges of the sheets S. Stapler 200a is then actuated. By rotating the returning member 1107 to position ii, by which the sheets are returned to the reference position on the bin B, or a position in the neighborhood thereof. Thereafter, the pushing member 1107 is returned to the retracted position and waits for the next sheets S on the next bin B.

In summary, in the Takehara reference, the sheet bunch is

transferred toward the matched edge direction and then stapled. After being stapled, the sheet bunch is transferred toward another edge direction opposite to the matched edge direction.

This is quite different from the present invention wherein the sheet bunch is transferred in the direction opposite to the matched edge or end of the sheet bunch by the transferring means; wherein each of the sheets is regulated by the matching means, and then each sheet bunch is stapled by the stapling means. After being stapled, the sheet bunch is transferred toward the matched edge or end direction by the transferring means and then stapled.

In comparison, the Takehara reference does not teach or suggest the possibility of retracting or transferring the sheet bunch by the transferring means in the direction opposite to the end of the sheet bunch wherein the matching means regulates the end of the sheet bunch for a first stapling and subsequently forwarding the sheet bunch by said transferring means toward the matched end direction for the second stapling.

Claim 1 has been amended so as to clarify this aspect.

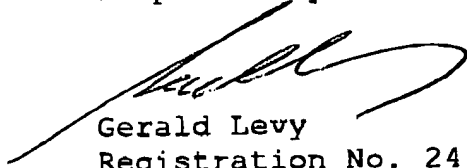
It is therefore respectfully submitted that Claims 1-8 are patentable over the Takehara reference.

For the reasons given above, it is further respectfully submitted that the double patenting rejection is overcome.

However, Applicant may consider filing a terminal disclaimer in the future with regard to this rejection.

For all of the reasons above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are in immediate condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw his rejections of the claims, to allow the claims, and to pass this application to early issue.

Respectfully submitted,



Gerald Levy  
Registration No. 24,419

(212) 687-6000  
Pitney, Hardin, Kipp & Szuch LLP  
711 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10017-4014

APPENDIX

Please amend Claim 1 as follows:

1. (three times amended) A sheet post-processing device which comprises:

storage means for storing sheets conveyed from an image forming device;

matching means for regulating at least one end of a sheet bunch stored by said storage means to match the sheets stored by said storage means;

stapling means for stapling the sheet bunch matched by the matching means; and

transfer means for once transferring the sheet bunch matched by said matching means in a first direction toward another end opposite to said one end of said sheet bunch and subsequently after stapling transferring the sheet bunch stapled by said stapling means in a second direction toward said one end.